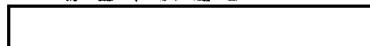


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25X1

CIA/BI GS 66-21
February 1966POTENTIAL CHOKEPPOINT IN MU GIA PASS AREA, NORTH VIETNAM

Route 15/12, the main Communist logistical route into the Laotian panhandle area, extends from North Vietnam through the Mu Gia Pass into Laos. Analysis has been undertaken to locate a chokepoint site in the Pass area that would both interdict Route 15/12 and require maximum enemy effort to bypass.

It is apparent from a study of Figure 2 that the Mu Gia Pass area in Laos tends to be a fairly open corridor. This fact is evidenced by the widely spaced contour lines on the map and is confirmed by the ground photos, Figures 10 and 11. The existence of 2 completed bypasses and one under construction around the present chokepoint in Laos (see Figures 2 and 3) indicates that the construction of bypasses in this area is feasible. It is not considered practical, therefore, to establish another chokepoint on the Laotian side of the Mu Gia Pass.

In contrast, in North Vietnam, the Mu Gia Pass area for a distance of about 9 miles north of the international border is a steep-sided, heavily forested, narrow valley* (see Figures 3 and 4). Route 15 is aligned along the lower slopes, just above the river. Space for construction of bypasses in the valley bottom is extremely limited. With maximum effort a bypass might be built higher up on the valley wall along the contour of the land. However, in view of the steep slopes (in the area of Profile C on Figures 3 and 6 the slope eastward and above the road is 42° or 90 percent) construction of a bypass, which would require some removal of the heavy forest, could result in landslides. Rainfall in this area is heavy -- from 120 to 140 inches annually.

* The Mu Gia Pass Barracks and Support Buildings (see Figure 5), is the only listed target in this immediate area. Washington has queried the field as to whether there has been any "bomb dumping" in the Mu Gia Pass farther northward.

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| | GROUP 1 |
| | Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification |

S-E-C-R-E-T 25X1



Farther north, in the areas of Profiles B and A (see Figures 5, 7, 8, and 9), the slopes are less steep and, consequently, bypass construction would be easier. These areas are, therefore, eliminated from consideration as potential chokepoint sites.

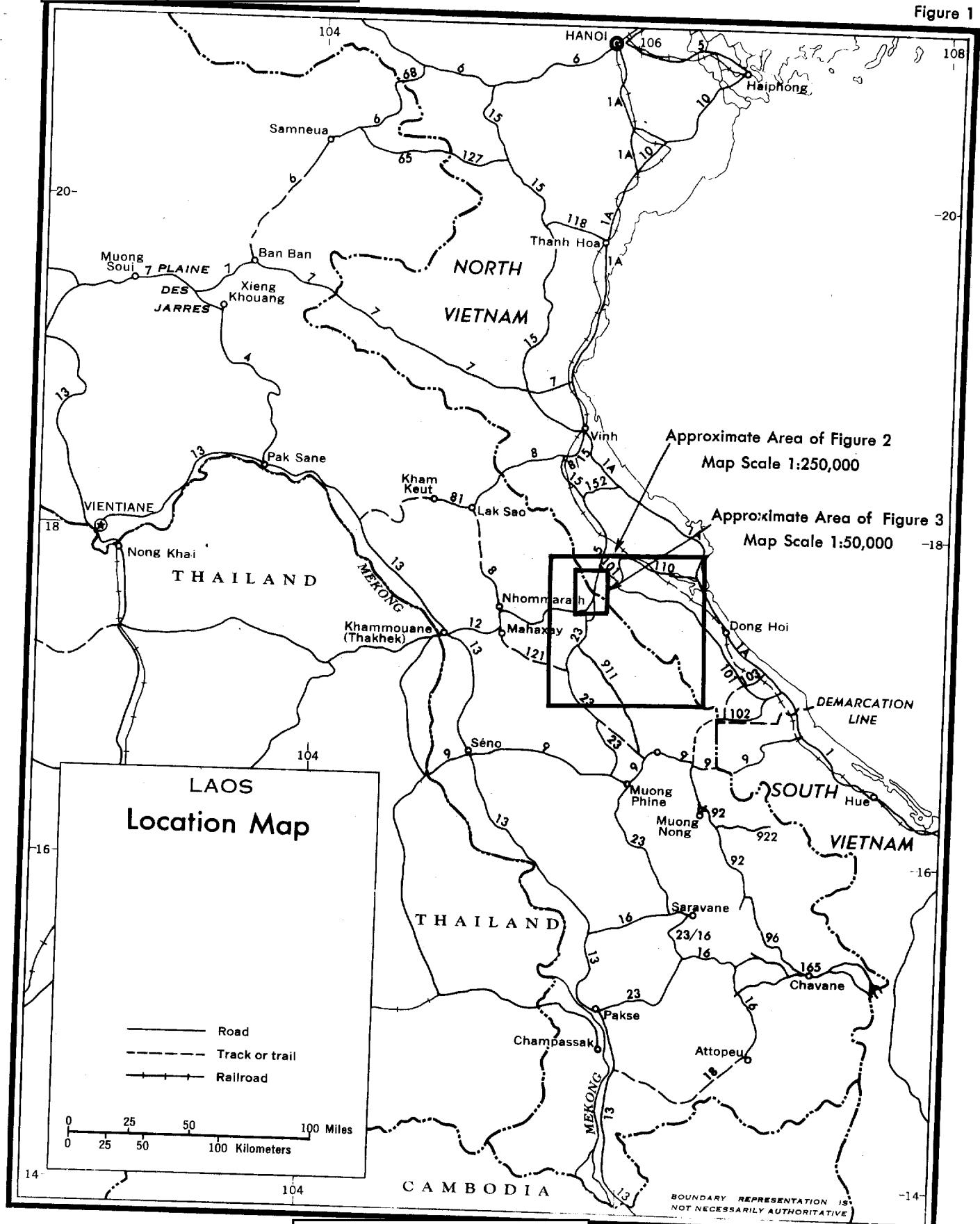
It is concluded that the area of Profile C, in consideration of the characteristics of the natural environment -- chiefly the steep slopes and constricted valley bottom -- is the best site for a chokepoint in the Mu Gia area and is well suited for purposes of interdiction.*

* The effect of interdicting this area will be somewhat minimized when the new road (see Figure 2) currently being built northeastward from Laoctian Route No. 911 is joined with the North Vietnamese road extending southwestward from North Vietnamese Route 101. This new road will offer an alternate route into southern Laos.

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Figure 1

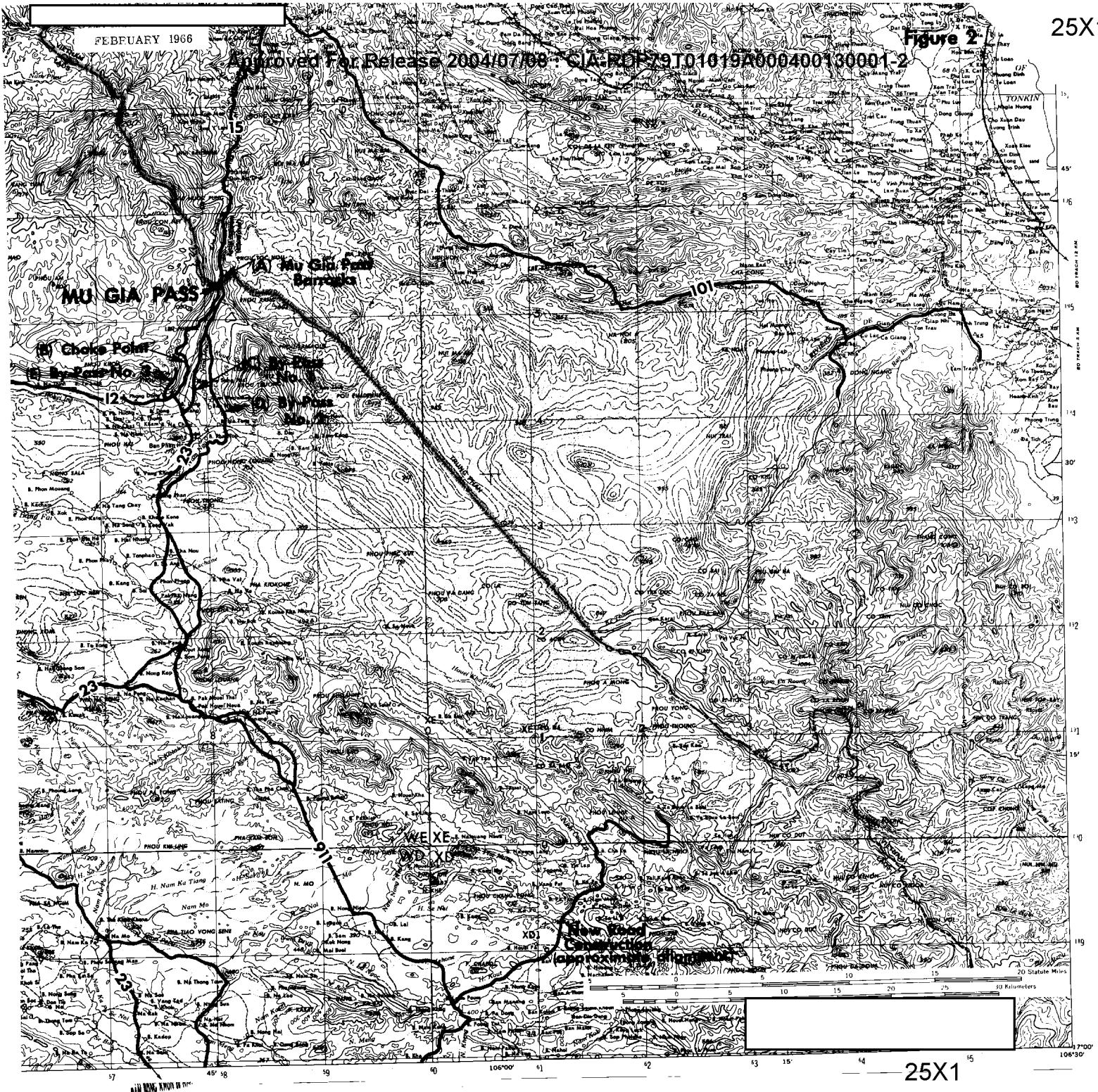


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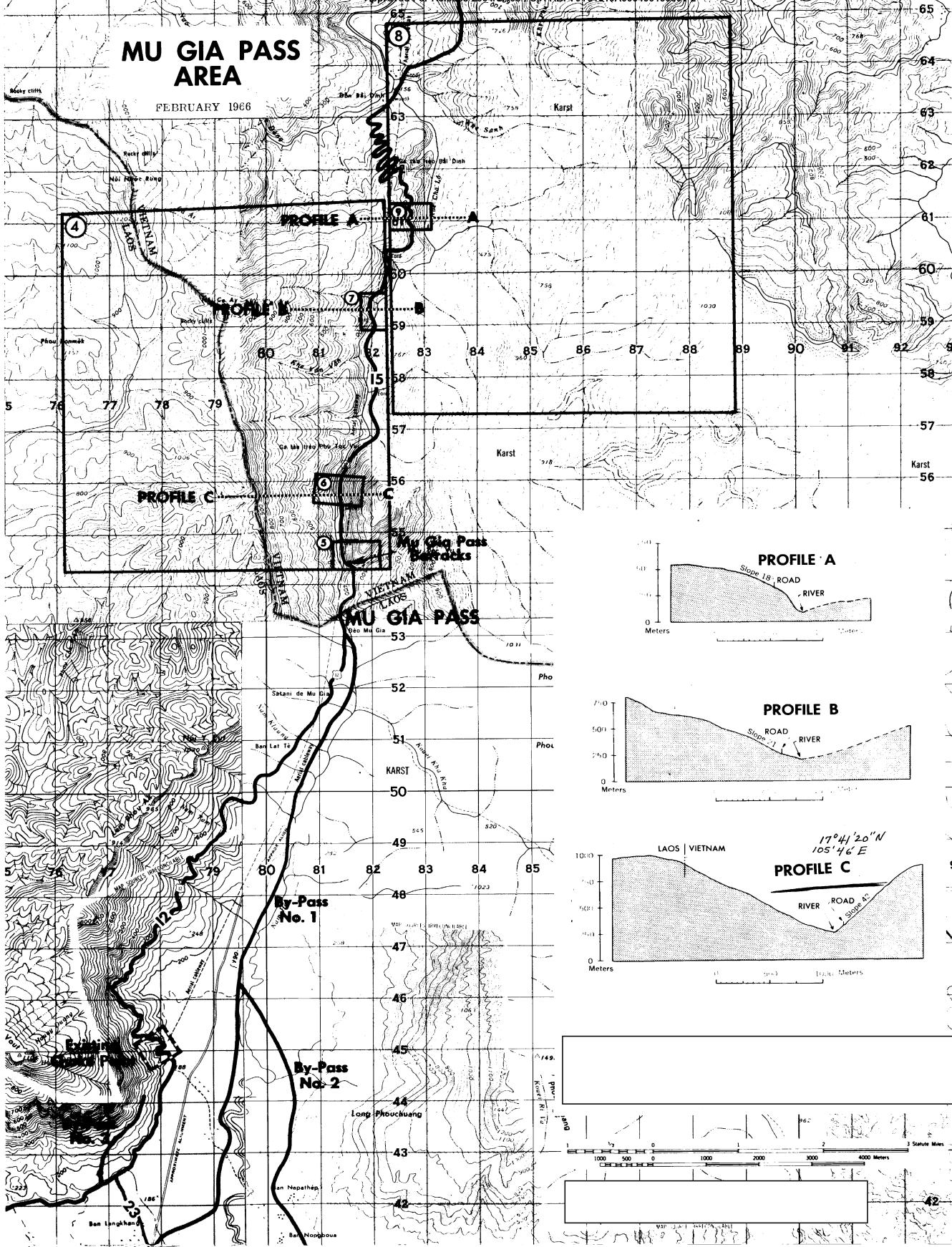
Figure 2

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MU GIA PASS AREA

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Figure 4. Photo shows heavily forested terrain through which Route 15 is aligned. Approximate alignment of Profiles B and C and location of Mu Gia Pass Army Barracks and Supply Point are also shown. Areas of coverage of all aerial photos in this study are shown on Figure 5.

PROFILE B

ROUTE 15

PROFILE C

MU GIA PASS ARMY BARRACKS
AND SUPPLY POINT

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ROUTE 15

Figure 5. Photo shows Mu Gia Pass Army Barracks and Supply Point. This complex, which is just north of the Laos-Vietnam border (see Figure 3), is the only listed target in the immediate Mu Gia Pass area. The buildings have severely damaged or destroyed.

MU GIA PASS ARMY BARRACKS
AND SUPPLY POINT



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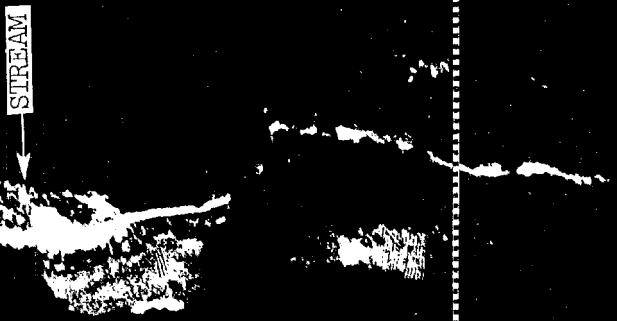
Figure 6. The area of Profile C is considered the best location for a bridge site as shown by the cross-section of Profile C (see Figure 2). The terrain rises as a steep, 420 (90 percent) slope on the east side of the road. On the west side of the road, the terrain slopes downward to a river bed before again rising as the west wall of the corridor. Space for construction of a bypass in the corridor bottomland is extremely limited. Any attempt to build a bypass on the slopes of the corridor walls might result in landslides in view of the heavy rainfall in this area.

ROUTE 15

PROFILE C



STREAM



ROUTE 15

PROFILE C

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PROFILE B

ROUTE 12

STREAM

Figure 7. Photo shows area of Profile B (see Figure 3). Terrain rises above road on the west side at a slope of about 21° , half the angle of the east slope shown in Profile C. This area is eliminated as a potential chokepoint site since construction of by-passes would be relatively easy.



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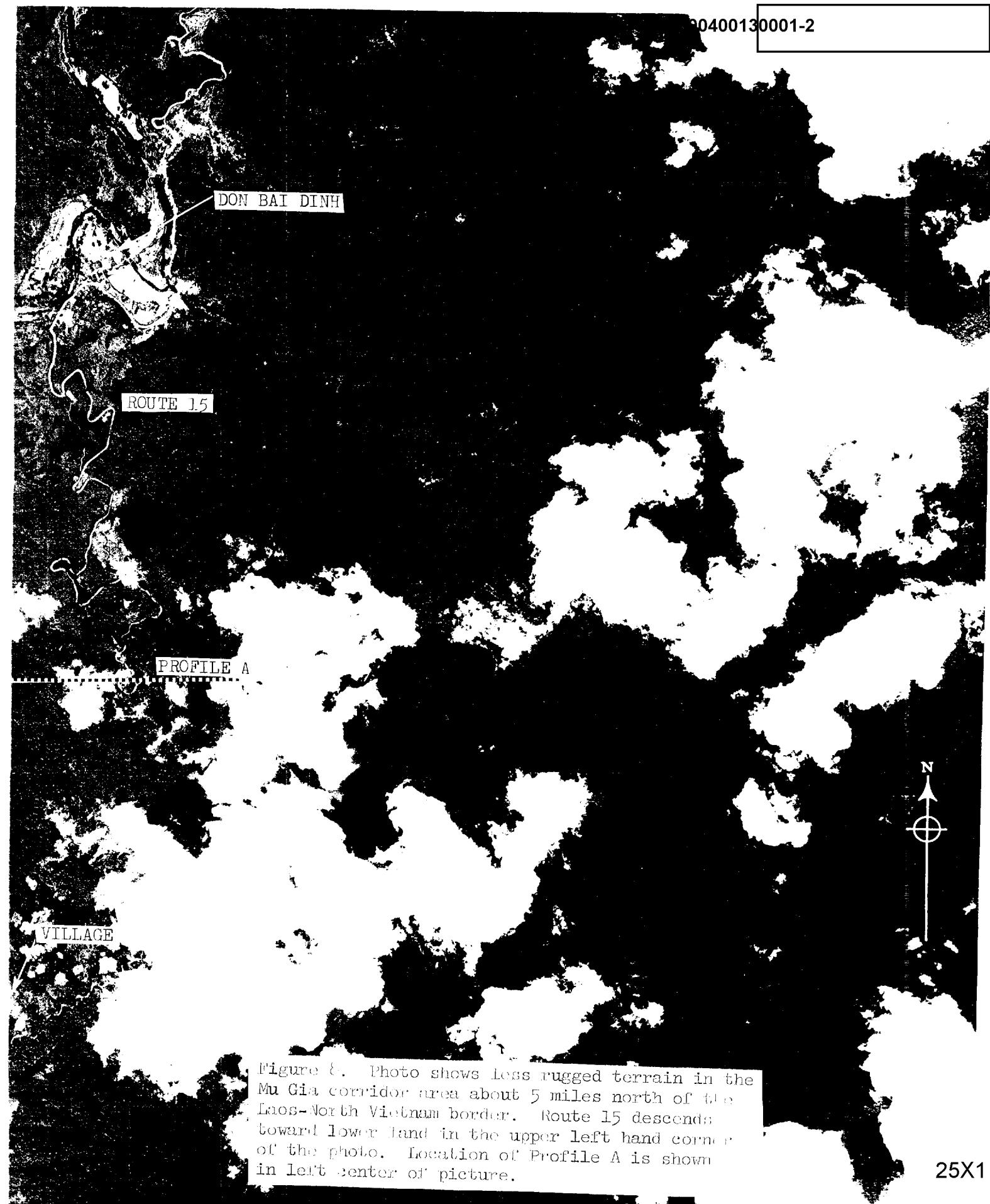


Figure 8. Photo shows less rugged terrain in the Mu Gia corridor area about 5 miles north of the Laos-North Vietnam border. Route 15 descends toward lower land in the upper left hand corner of the photo. Location of Profile A is shown in left center of picture.

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Figure 9. Photo shows area of Profile A (see Figure 8). Terrain rises west of road at a slope of 1:3. Since by-passes could be built along the relatively open concave of the terrain above the road, this area is eliminated as a potential chokepoint site.

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25X1

Trace of Route 12 is visible at left. The immediate area of Mu Gia Pass is in right background. Supporting towers at right are part of abandoned aerial 26-mile cableway (see trace on Figure 3) built in 1954 between Xom-Hung in North Vietnam and the terminal shown in this picture; when in full operation, the 440 cars were capable of moving 10 tons per hour.

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Figure 11. View from Ia Drang looking toward Mi Gia Pass. Photo is similar to Figure 10 but taken at greater distance from the Pass. [redacted]
Route 12 is visible at left of photo. [redacted]